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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

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51

3 November 1967
No. 0314/67

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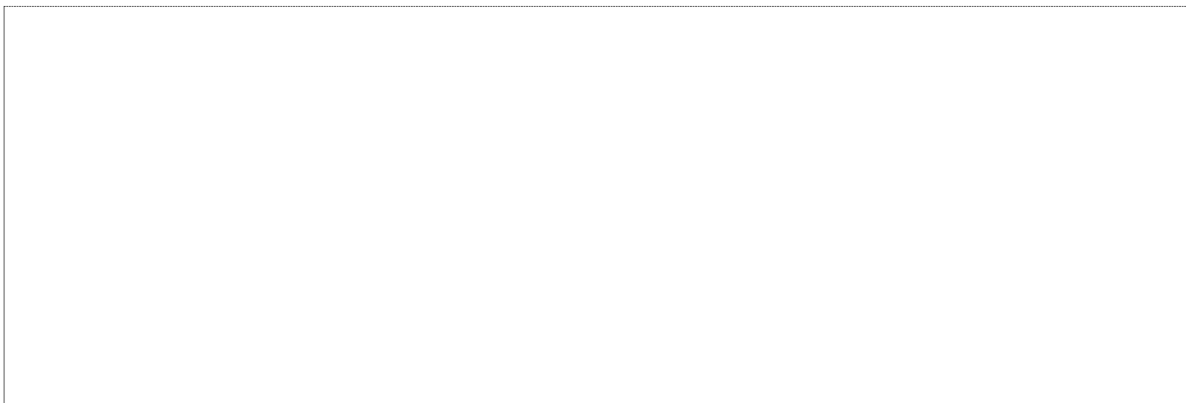
C O N T E N T S

(Information as of noon EST, 2 November 1967)

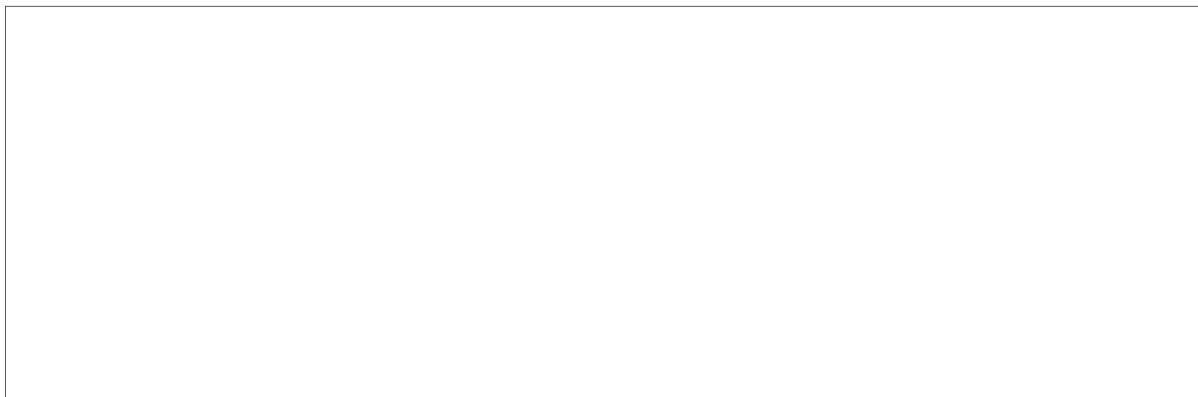
Far East

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The final steps in establishing constitutional government were taken on 31 October with the inauguration of Thieu and Ky, and the installation of the lower house of the legislature. Meanwhile, there are further indications that the Communists plan to step up offensive operations in areas that have been relatively quiet during recent months.



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FAR EAST

Hanoi denounced the inauguration of the new Saigon government as an "odious farce" that took place in an atmosphere of terror and repression. North Vietnamese propaganda portrayed the Viet Cong mortar attack on Independence Palace during the inaugural reception as proof that the Thieu-Ky "clique" could not even ensure effective security in their own capital. On the eve of Vice President Humphrey's arrival, Hanoi claimed that Saigon could not guarantee his safety and warned of "terrible things" to come. The intensive Communist assault on allied positions in Binh Long Province north of Saigon may also have been an attempt to score a military success timed to reduce the political impact of the inauguration.

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VIETNAM

The final steps in the establishment of constitutional government were taken on 31 October with the inauguration of Thieu and Ky and the installation of the lower house of the legislature.

The political make-up of the lower house confirms the trend evident in the presidential and upper house elections--the demise of the old political groupings and the rise of new centers of political power. The old-line Vietnamese Nationalist Party (VNQDD) and the Dai Viet Party, for example, elected only 17 representatives to the house, while a new political entity--the Farmer, Worker, Soldier Party led by Senator Tran Van Don--elected at least 21 members. Don's group comprises the largest single bloc in the house.

Of the 35 Catholic members, only 15 have been identified as representatives of Catholic political organizations. In the past, however, the Catholics have shown considerable organizational ability and they may eventually provide the nucleus of a very strong political grouping. Although about 65 Buddhists were elected to the house, most of them are probably uncommitted to any bloc and there is no discernible prospect at this time that they will be able to form a cohesive unit. Only six of the Buddhists have been identified with the militant An Quang faction.

The dispute between the militant and moderate Buddhist factions over the charter issue remains unresolved, but some elements are alleged to be pressing for a reconciliation. These elements apparently believe that Buddhist unity must be achieved in view of Catholic strength in the National Assembly. Despite these pressures, moderate leader Thich Tam Chau has reinstated the charter that he had suspended earlier, at government request, in an effort to reach a settlement with the militants. Should the desire for unity spread in Buddhist circles, the intransigent Buddhist leaders may become increasingly isolated from their followers.

Despite apparent behind-the-scenes efforts toward a compromise, the militants continue to keep up pressure on the government to revoke Chau's charter. An attempted militant protest in Saigon was broken up by the police on 29 October, while timely countermeasures by the police in Hue may have headed off Buddhist plans for extensive antigovernment demonstrations there.

The Military Situation
in the South

There have been further indications this week that the Communists are planning to step up offensive operations in the northern

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III Corps area--a region that has been a relatively quiet military sector during recent months. This move is probably aimed at maintaining widespread pressure on the allies in the hope of preventing a concentration of allied strength against Communist units in any one area.

At least two regimental elements of the Viet Cong 9th Division have deployed into the Loc Ninh - Phuoc Binh area. Beginning on 28 October, Communist units mounted attacks on strategic allied military facilities in the vicinity of Loc Ninh. Although they suffered heavy casualties in the assaults, it appears that they intend to keep up the pressure and that the focus of the action may shift to the vicinity of Phuoc Binh.

The Communists may hope to repeat successes they scored in this region in early 1965 when severe casualties were inflicted on several ARVN units. The terrain facilitates the mounting of ambushes and the protected movement of Communist units. Reports by prisoners suggest that elements of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) 7th Division may also have been involved in the action along with the NVA 88th Regiment--an outfit that recently moved into III Corps from the western highlands.

North Vietnamese Military Developments

North Vietnam will probably continue to operate a small force

of fighter aircraft from DRV airfields despite the heavy damage to its air establishment during the past week.

For the time being, MIG activity probably will be limited in scope and intensity. Air engagements and bombing raids have greatly reduced the number of fighters in North Vietnam. Moreover, substantial damage to equipment and injury to key personnel probably have occurred as a result of the air strikes on Phuc Yen.

The North Vietnamese, however, have already restored their airfields to the extent that at least limited MIG operations can be supported. US aircraft have been challenged by Communist fighters on several occasions since the Phuc Yen raids.

Hanoi apparently intends to continue interceptor missions even if they are on a small scale. By maintaining the threat of fighter opposition, North Vietnam can force the US to continue to provide its strike groups with heavy fighter cover. Moreover, this tactic constitutes a low-cost proposition for Hanoi, in that it demands only a limited number of operational fighters and serviceable runways.

Truck Traffic in Laos Panhandle

The annual movement of supplies from North Vietnam into the Laos panhandle appears to be

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under way as the rainy season draws to a close. Aerial observers have spotted heavy truck movement on Route 912, one of the two main roads from North Vietnam into Laos. The Communists have also probably been building up stockpiles along Route 15 near the Mu Gia Pass in anticipation of the coming of the dry season.

The amount of supplies moved through the panhandle road network is believed to have risen during the dry seasons of the past three years. A high of about 30,000 tons moved into the panhandle via the 912, Mu Gia, and Lao-Cambodian route, during the 1966-67 season, and the Communists probably intend to ship at least as large a quantity during the coming dry season.

Soviet Anniversary Celebrations

North Vietnam has sent to the USSR's 50th anniversary celebration a top-level delegation that includes party First Secretary Le Duan and politburo members Vo Nguyen Giap and Nguyen Duy Trinh. Le Duan reportedly has been in Moscow for the past several weeks, presumably to work out with the Soviets exactly how the Vietnam war and China will be treated during the anniversary. Press articles by North Vietnamese leaders in honor of the occasion have contained praise of both Chinese and Soviet assistance on the war. The North Vietnamese are known to have voiced displeasure to DRV officials in Moscow because certain Soviet broadcasts omitted passages from one article that were favorable to Peking.

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